

With Mother's best love
to dear Gwen.

January 11th 1931.

THE PRACTICE
OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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THE PRACTICE OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE

BY THE REV.

W. Y. FULLERTON

AUTHOR OF "LIFE'S DUSTY WAY" "GOD'S HIGH WAY"
"AT THE SIXTIETH MILESTONE" ETC. ETC.

New and Revised Edition

MORGAN & SCOTT LTD.

12, PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS
LONDON, E.C. MCMXX

FIRST EDITION, 1916

NEW AND REVISED EDITION, 1919

Reprinted, 1920

And all the while, in street or lane or byway—
In country lane, in city street, or byway—

You walked among us, and we did not see.
Your feet were bleeding, as You walked our
pavements—

How *did* we miss your Footprints on our
pavements—

Can there be other folk as blind as we?

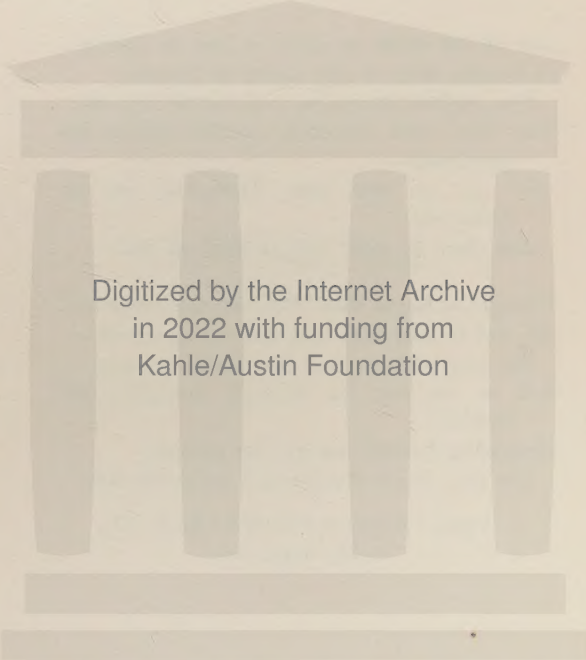
Though we forgot You—You will not forget us—
We feel so sure that You will not forget us—

But stay with us until this dream is past.
And so we ask for courage, strength, and
pardon—

Especially, I think, we ask for pardon—

And that You'll stand beside us to the last.

From "Christ in Flanders," by L. W.,
in *The Spectator*.



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I
THE PROMISE

“Every believer realises by experience that Christ is the only perfect sympathiser. ‘I’m not perfectly understood,’ says everybody in fact. But if you are a believer you are perfectly understood. Christ is the only one who never expects you to be other than *yourself*, and He puts in abeyance toward you all but what is like you. He takes your view of things and mentions no other. He takes the old woman’s view of things by the wash-tub, and has a great interest in wash powder ; Sir Isaac Newton’s view of things, and wings among the stars with him ; the artist’s view, and feeds among the lilies ; the lawyer’s, and shares the justice of things. But He never plays the lawyer, or the philosopher, or the artist to the old woman. He is above that littleness.”—*Letters of James Smetham*, p. 297.

THE PRACTICE OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE

I

THE PROMISE

Thou art the Life within me,
O Jesus, King of kings ;
Thou art Thyself the answer
To all my questionings.

IN these grim days, when the earth is so crowded with griefs and graves, there is a sadness over all our hearts because we miss loved presences that cheered us in the days gone by—husband, brother, lover, son, or friend. And perhaps our sorrow is more acute because we feel that, when they were with us, we did not value them as we might have done ; now we mourn that we shall never on earth see them again.

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It is very difficult to know how to comfort those who mourn for their dead. I think the only true solace is to have a new realisation of a Presence that will never fail—the solace of the conscious nearness of Jesus Christ.

A saint whose name is fragrant over the whole world, was once asked to put in a sentence what had brought such joy and victory into his own life, and he answered in the words of the Psalmist, "I have set the Lord always before me." That is the secret of everything, that is the true source of comfort, that is the solution of every spiritual difficulty. In the world you can never learn anything for this mortal life beyond that, and nowhere on earth can you need more.

Let us then in these chapters set ourselves more earnestly to seek Him as we meditate on the practice of Christ's presence. The very suggestion of such a title will challenge comparison with those eloquent words of Bishop Jeremy Taylor in the first chapter of his *Holy Living*, where, after speaking of "The Care of our Time" and "The Purity of Intention," he writes of the practice of the presence of God; will challenge comparison, too, with that little classic with the

same title by Nicholas Hermann of Lorraine, better known as "Brother Lawrence." But these two works are incomparable, and our intention and purpose are altogether different.

We must in thought transport ourselves to the mountain in Galilee where the five hundred brethren met Christ at once after His resurrection. It was the place known to them where their tryst with Christ was to be kept. Those early disciples came with one purpose to the appointed place. We can imagine the feelings that stirred their hearts as they gathered to meet Jesus. Everybody who was there owed something to the Lord ; and everybody who owed anything to the Lord would seek to be there. Lazarus would be there, and the widow of Nain with her son, twice hers since he had been raised from the dead ; the little damsel too who had been awakened from her sleep at Christ's word, and Jairus ; the man of Gadara ; Mary Magdalene ; the centurion with his servant ; the man who had been sick of the palsy, with his four friends ; Bartimæus and the others who had received their sight ; Zacchæus and Nicodemus, meeting perhaps for the first time ; Peter's wife and her mother ;

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Joseph of Arimathæa ; Mary surely would be there, and probably the brethren of Jesus. These and others waited for the Master, and presently the Lord, who had breakfasted the disciples by the side of the Lake of Galilee, came into the midst of them. They had back again with them the loved Presence that had been lost, and they listened to His words.

“ Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them ” [or, as I suggest the reading, “ where Jesus had made an appointment with them.” He always keeps His appointments]. “ And when they saw Him, they worshipped Him : but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you : and lo ! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”

What a thrill would go through them as He said, now that He was restored to them, that He would never leave them more ; that He would

be with them unto the end of the world! They all worshipped, and the doubts of the believers were stilled as He spoke. He was there, and that was heaven. They had His presence, and His promise to steady their hearts in view of a future that would hold many things that else might have made them dismayed.

It was a glorious thing for them to receive the great commission; but it was more wonderful to be assured of the continual Presence which would save them from being aliens anywhere in the world, would make every place home, all the world their sphere, and all nations their quest.

There are five things that appeal to us in this promise, and there are five things that flow out of it.

The first is that it is the presence not of God as God, but of God as Christ that is promised. This was to the early disciples something entirely new. It was the same Christ whose feet had walked their hills, whose voice had entered into their consciousness, that was to be with them all the days. It was not just the renewed assurance of the omnipresence of God, the realisation that God enfolds

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us as an impalpable Spirit, as a governing Force in life. The presence of Christ not only enables me to say, "Since Thou my God art everywhere, I cannot be where Thou art not"; it is the coming to me, as if there were no one else in the world, of the very Christ who was with His disciples in the olden time.

In the Old Testament they recognised that God's presence was near. "Whither shall I flee from Thy presence?" said the Psalmist. "If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me." But though men knew that, they tried to escape from God because of their sin. Our first father tried to hide from God's presence in the garden; Jonah fled from the presence of the Lord when he was ordered to Nineveh.

Others loved and tried to get near Him. When David brought up the ark to Jerusalem, he said, "Glory and honour are in Thy presence." His great word in another psalm is: "In Thy presence is fulness of joy, at Thy right hand there

are pleasures for evermore.” And the worst thing that could happen to him even in his sin was to be cast away from God’s presence.

But this is more than that. This is the presence of Christ Himself ; this is the presence of Jesus, who was crucified, and now lives for ever. If we believe that, we shall never want a crucifix to remind us of it. We shall think of Him, not as dead upon a tree, but living, near, interested, unfailing. It is not God as God, but it is God as Christ who guarantees His presence. That is a great discovery to make.

The second thing is that this presence is promised to certain people. It is a missionary promise, and unless we are willing to be Christ’s witnesses in our own little bit of the world, we cannot justly claim it. The “ go ” and the “ lo ” are together. It is those who take His yoke who take Christ, and find the rest of going forth to service as His yoke-fellows.

“ All authority is given unto Me in heaven and in earth,” the Lord said ; “ go ye therefore——” Is that “ therefore ” just the great imperative of a Master who has a right to order us where He will ? No, the force of it resides in

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the promise: "Go ye therefore, because I go with you." It is not that He gives me *some* power and bids me go; but that He who has *all* power is going, and asks me to go with Him.

You remember that He said, "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father. . . . Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." We can receive rest from Him because all things are in His hand; now when He is risen from the dead, because all authority is His, we who have come to Him for rest can go for Him anywhere He calls us, for we never go alone.

The third thing is that it is a promise guaranteed in all places. When Mark gives his account of the disciples' obedience to the command, he says: "They went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." Everywhere the Lord was with them. Christ's people have found this to be true in all ages. In every land and on all the seas they have found Him nigh—found Him in prisons and in palaces, amid strangers and amid friends, in the hours of rapture and in the common ways of life.

The Promise

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“ If St. John were in England,” Canon Robinson recently said, “ what wonderful things he would have to say about it, what clouds of glory he would see over Lothbury, what rivers he would see run down the valley of Cheapside ! ” If we had the seeing eye, no doubt Christ would be more evident to us in the familiar places of life ; but it does not need St. John to make the discovery. There was once a man in London, homeless and ill-fed, walking up and down the Embankment, who realised that Christ was near. He says :

Yea, in the night, my Soul, my daughter,
Cry,—clinging Heaven by the hems,
And lo, Christ walking on the water,
Not of Gennesareth but Thames !

I generally cross the Thames twice a day, but I never cross it without thinking of Francis Thompson, clinging Heaven by the hems and finding Christ walking on the water in the centre of the busy city. But he went further ; for later on he sang about the Master :

And bolder now and bolder,
I lean upon that shoulder,
So dear
He is and near ;

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And with His aureole
The tresses of my soul
Are blent
In wished content.

Well, you say, that is poetic imagination ; ordinary people cannot realise Christ so near ! Suppose, then, we think of Livingstone—whatever Livingstone was, he was not a poet. When out in Africa he was confronted by a chief who refused to let him pass, he thought that in the night he would try to cross the river and escape ; but opening his Testament, he read : “ Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world ” ; and he said, “ It is the word of a gentleman of the most sacred and strictest honour. I will not cross furtively by night as I intended. It would appear as flight, and should such a man as I flee ? ” He found the promise true in Africa—the Lord was with him. He practised Christ's presence.

If that does not bring conviction to your minds, may I tell you of a little company of Russian peasants in those old bad days when to worship in any other way than that of the order of the Greek Church was to incur the penalty of the law. Thirty of them met secretly in a little room

in Vladikavkas, when suddenly the agent of the Procurator-General entered, and they knew that they were to be haled before the magistrate. Their names were taken—thirty of them ; their number counted. When the police officer was going out, one of the company came to him and said, “ There is one name you have not got.” He said, “ No, I have them all.” “ No,” said the old peasant, “ there is one name you have not got.” To make sure, the officer counted them again, and again called the names. “ I have all,” he said. Still the old leader said, “ No, there is one name you have not got.” “ Who is it, then ? ” demanded the Government agent. “ The Lord Jesus ! ” “ Oh ! ” he said, “ that is a different matter.” Yes, that is an altogether different matter, but that is the thing that matters supremely : that we as individuals, as churches, and as a nation should realise the Lord’s promise. If Christ is with us, all is well ; without Him, we are bereft of power.

The fourth thing is that this is the promise of perpetual presence. As our Lord uttered them, the words were in a different order from that in our Bible. When they fell from His lips,

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they would suggest to the disciples that He was the great I AM who was opening His arms to take them to His heart. We have the words, "I am with you"; as He said them they ran, "I with you am." The emphasis is on the perpetual presence, the two arms opening, and you lying upon His heart: "I *with you* AM."

We often translate it, and rightly, as, "Lo, I am with you all the days, even to the end of the age"; but Dr. Weymouth with greater insight combines both ideas: "I am with you always, day by day, even to the close of the age." It is always—a perpetual presence; and yet it is day by day—only one day at a time. We sing:

Jesus, the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far Thy face to see,
And in Thy presence rest.

There indeed we may rest. We need never fear to love Him too much. Some of us are feeling to-day, in the miss of those other presences we loved and in which we delighted, that we are almost afraid to love people lest we should lose them. One of the most sadly beautiful books I know is Mr. Canton's *Invisible Playmate*.

The child he loved died, and when God gave him another, he resolutely refused to let his love go out to the second child because the loss of the first was a pain so terrible. I think, perhaps, some of us understand that, but you need never fear to let your heart go out lavishly to Jesus Christ. He will never leave, never fail you. He is with you all the days, even unto the end.

This negatives any apprehension that there will ever come a day so dark or difficult, so cloudy or colourless, that Christ will not be present. He will be with us in the waiting days and in the working days, in the perilous days and in the peaceful days, in the sad days and in the glad days, in the birth days and in the death days—He will be with us all the days ; and so, like the American philosopher, you may “ write it in your hearts that every day is the best day of the year.”

Lift up your heads, ye sorrowing ones,
And be glad at heart,
For Calvary day and Easter day,
The saddest and the gladdest day,
Were but one day apart.

So we may sing, as in the ninetieth Psalm, “ O satisfy us early with Thy mercy, that we may be

glad and rejoice all our days," and then go back to the eighty-ninth Psalm and chant, "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance. In Thy name shall they rejoice all the day." And as we sing we may learn to be glad all the days and all the day.

The assurance is not built on a single promise, though one promise of Christ would be sufficient for the believing heart. He says again, in His discourse in the Upper Room, "I will not leave you orphans. I come to you"—not "I will come to you," but I come, I am always coming, I am ever there.

Now, in the fifth place, we meet a difficulty. Why did the Lord prescribe what seems to be an arbitrary limit to the promise and say, "I will be with you to the end of the age"? Of course He is not referring to the end of the world as a material thing, the end of this cosmos. There is indeed nothing in the Bible about the end of the world. It is the end of the world-order of the present age He means. But why did He limit His presence to the end of the age? Does it mean that when the age

is over, the Lord will withdraw His presence—that He will not be with His people afterwards? Quite the reverse of that.

We recognise that our Lord's presence in this age is different from His presence in the past age. The nearest thing I can find in the Old Testament to this promise is in Isaiah, where it is written: "In all their afflictions He was afflicted, and the Angel of His presence saved them." Now, that is beautiful. But what does the phrase "The Angel of His presence" mean? Was it the angel who stood nearest to God who came to help the people? Such an angel as Gabriel, who said to Mary, "I stand in the presence of God." No, I think it was not the angel who stood in the Presence, but the angel that brought the Presence, who saved God's people in the old time. It was the Lord Himself who visited them. But in this age He does not visit, He abides. He who is in the bosom of the Father comes so near to you and me that when the apostles tried to explain it they could only say that Christ is in us and that we are in Christ.

Is that going to end at the end of the age? The difficulty drives us to a delightful solution.

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Just as the Presence in this age is greater and nearer, more constant and less remote than in the past age, in the next age, instead of Christ's presence being less real it is to be more glorious and more manifest.

This age is to end with the "parousia." That word is generally translated "coming," but twice, when referring to the Apostle Paul, it is translated "presence," and I think it could be justly translated "presence" all the time. At the end of the age, so far from the withdrawal of the Lord, His presence is to be more splendidly revealed. "The epiphany of His parousia," to quote a great phrase from the second Epistle to the Thessalonians, is just the shining forth of a presence that was there all the while. Now we see the reason of the limitation of the promise to the end of the age. It is because the Presence will then be more vivid and magnificent.

By these five steps, then, we have come to the assurance of the real presence of the living Christ. When I was a younger Christian, I was greatly helped by what Miss Havergal said about this promise in one of her little books. "You must believe that it is true," she said, "whether you

realise it or not." I did not feel it, I could not realise it; it seemed too great a thing to be true. I thought I was too great a sinner or too little a saint to claim such a blessing; but at length I dared to believe that the Lord was really with me every day. Now, are you prepared to believe it—that day by day, every day, always, through thick and thin, light or dark, disease or sickness, victory or failure, the Lord is with you? Do you believe it? You may realise it in different phases and degrees, but it is true whether you realise it or not.

Five things flow from these considerations. The first is evident: that, if you have the Lord's presence, you never can be alone. In my mission days I remember once, at the end of a campaign in Bradford, we set apart a whole day to see inquirers; and among the rest came a lady, with a very troubled experience. She had gone from church to church, even the Roman Catholic Church, seeking rest and never finding it. We spoke at length to her, but it was all in vain. She knew all that anybody could say; so I suggested that, instead of talking any more, she should go into a side room, and have it

out with the Lord Himself. She stayed so long that we thought some accident had happened, but at length she came out with glory on her face, and the only thing she said to me as she passed out of my life was, "I shall never be lonely again!"

That is the secret, the pith, the marrow, the centre and the kernel of the salvation of Christ ; the one thing that solves every difficulty, the master-key that opens every door. If you have the presence of Christ, you can never be alone.

In the second place, with Christ's presence sin will be different to us. If we accept the Lord's word, and know that the perpetual presence is ours,—not just as God everywhere present, not just the reaching of the soul after God, and God guiding the life ; but that the actual presence of Jesus Christ as truly as in that upper room, as truly as He talked with Peter or walked with John, is mine—*He* is with *me*,—then sin will be a very different thing. When we walk with Christ as our unfailing friend, it is terrible to fail Him, and the treachery is none the less because on our repentance He smiles forgiveness on us again.

A great saint of the Church said, "I always sinned as in Thy sight!" You can never sin anywhere else. Jeremy Taylor advises a man who wants to sin to go where God is not. "Be sure while you are in His sight you behave yourself as becomes so holy a presence. But if you will sin, retire yourself wisely, and go where God cannot see, for nowhere else can you be safe." The heinousness of sin in a saint is that he sins in the very presence of Christ, who never leaves him; sins like a child sinning in the presence of the father, like a servant sinning in the presence of the master. You cannot get away from the Lord Jesus Christ. He is with you always—at the sinning time as well as the saintly time. But if you realise His presence, you will not sin.

One of the greatest words about holiness is in the first Epistle of John, where it says, "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that Wicked One toucheth him not." The Revision reads, as you know, "He that is begotten of God keepeth him." I advise you to get into the Revised Version of that text now. The first is weary work—"keepeth himself"; but the

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last gives the true rendering, both from the critical and the experimental standpoint—the only begotten of God, the best Beloved, “He that is begotten of God, keepeth him.” And so we are kept day by day—it is not our doing but His.

The memory and example of Christ are not enough. Nor is it enough to have had touch with Him in days gone by. We know the moral bracing that comes from the recollection of the touch of a strong hand at some crisis in life, or from the remembrance of some deep friendship. But it is the loving presence of the Lord of our hearts that we need to deliver us. Not even the memory of His Cross can save us; not even the gifts He bestows can suffice; He Himself must be our Saviour. It is excellent poetry to sing:

I need Thy presence every passing hour,
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power;

but the hymn slides into the mistake to which we are always liable, of beginning with the presence and becoming satisfied with the grace. But not even the grace of Christ suffices without the Christ Himself who gives it

In the third place, we need never fear as to our equipment and our future. You may not know where the Lord will send you, but you know He will not send you anywhere, or command you to do anything, and not be nigh. You need not trouble as to your sufficiency. I remember how I feared, as I once thought of attempting to speak on this great topic; but then I said to myself, "You are a foolish man. You are going to tell those people about Christ's presence. If what you say is true, and Christ is to be with you, what does it matter who else is there? The Lord will help you. He will steady your nerves, give you courage, grant you liberty, and be all you need." So is it always with all the saints.

Oh, believe me, Christ's presence is the sum of all holy living. John Brown of Haddington asserts, "I would not exchange the learning of one hour's fellowship with Christ for all the liberal learning in ten thousand universities during ten thousand years, even though angels were to be my teachers." If you say that is ancient history, then may I speak of a modern instance. Phillips Brooks was once crossing the

Atlantic, and a young friend of his wanted to see him. He searched for him on deck and in the state rooms, and could not find him. Then he went to his cabin and knocked, but got no answer. Gently opening the door, he saw the bishop inside, prostrate on the floor, and heard him say, "Lord Jesus, Thou hast filled my life with peace and gladness. To look into Thy face is earth's most exquisite joy."

It is not, however, only the saints of the old time or men eminent in saintship to-day who may have experiences like that ; it is not only at odd times, at special seasons and Conventions, that the Lord manifests Himself ; the promise is that He will not only visit you in distress or perplexity, but will be with you all the days, even to the close of the age, until, as the word implies, the last thread of the web is knitted up, and the full purpose of God is finished.

There are two things more, and they are similar. The first of these, the fourth of the five, is that if Jesus Christ and you are together, you must do for Him what He cannot do for Himself. If there is a kind word that should be spoken to-day, He cannot say it ; you

can. He would like to speak it ; you *must*. If there is a deed to be done, a sacrifice to be made, a witness to be borne, you must do it. The gospel must be carried to the regions beyond. He cannot do that, you must. Since we walk together, surely there must be such co-operation—what the Lord cannot do for Himself, and I can do for Him, that, by His grace, I must do and will.

The converse is also true : that which he knows you cannot do for yourself, He will. This is the fifth thing to remember. If others fail you, He faileth never. Paul found this true when he stood before Nero's court, unable to defend himself, and without a single human helper. But Christ came to his aid. In triumph he is able to make the record, " Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me."

The believer will never lack an advocate, for the Lord hath said, with the emphasis of five negatives, " No, no, I will never leave thee. I will never, never forsake thee." So that we may boldly say, " The Lord is my helper. I will not fear what man shall do unto me." That is what the Apostle means when he writes to the

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Philippians : " Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand." He does not mean that you are to be a total abstainer because the Lord is coming by and by. It is good to abstain from strong drink, and it is true that the Lord is coming, but the verse says neither of these things. The word " moderation " really means " sweet reasonableness," or " meekness," or, as Bishop Moule translates it, " Let your yieldingness be known to all men." That is to say, you need not on occasion stand up for yourself. Why ? Because the Lord is coming ? No ; but because the Lord is nigh. The presence is with you. Let your sweet reasonableness, then, be known to all men ; you need not always be troubling about your reputation, upholding your rights, asserting your place in the world. What does all that matter ? Your great companion will secure for you your fitting place, will worthily guard your reputation, will surely preserve your goings.

So, men and women, the promise comes down through the centuries—the promise that was given to Moses, but was not given to him in such measure as it is granted to you and me : " My

Presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." May I very humbly suggest to everyone who is seeking a fuller realisation of Christ, that as you end this chapter you look up to the Lord at this moment, and say, "If Thy Presence go not with me, carry me not up hence."

Matthew xxviii. 16-20 ; Psalm cxxxix. 7 ; 1 Chronicles xvi. 27 ; Psalm xvi. 11 ; Matthew xi. 27, 28 ; Mark xvi. 20 ; John xiv. 18 ; Isaiah lxiii. 9 ; Luke i. 19 ; 2 Thessalonians ii. 8 ; 1 John v. 18 ; Hebrews xiii. 5, 6 ; Philippians iv. 5 ; Exodus xxxiii. 15.

II
THE EXPERIENCE

“ I saw the dead Christs over the altars, and the kneeling crowds around. Suddenly it seemed to me that I was conscious of a general movement and rush of feet, and that a strange and wild excitement prevailed in every part of Rome. The churches became emptied, the people pouring out into the streets: the dead Christs above the altars faded from their crosses, and the sacred tapers went out of their own accord; for it spread through Rome, as in a moment, that a miracle had happened at the Ara Coeli, and that the living Christ was come.

“ He came down the steps into the Campidoglio and He came to me. He was not at all like the pictures of the saints: for He was pale, and worn, and thin, as though the fight were not yet half over—ah, no!—but through this pale and worn look shone infinite power, and undying love, and unquenchable resolve. The crowd fell back on every side, but when He came to me He stopped. ‘ Ah,’ He said, ‘ is it thou? What doest thou here? Knowest thou not that thou art Mine? Thrice Mine—Mine centuries ago when I hung upon the Cross on Calvary for such as thou—Mine years ago when thou camest a little child to the world—Mine once again when, forfeit by every law, thou wast given over to Me by one who is a servant and friend of Mine. Surely I will repay.’

“ As He spoke, a shudder and a trembling ran through the crowd, as if stirred by the breath of His voice. Nature seemed to rally and to grow beneath Him, and heaven to bend down to touch the earth. A healing sense of help and comfort, like the gentle dew, visited the weary heart. A great cry and shout rose from the crowd, and He passed on; but among ten thousand times ten thousand I should know Him, and amid the tumult of a universe I should hear the faintest whisper of His voice.”—*John Inglesant*, chap. xv. vol. ii.

II

THE EXPERIENCE

He tents within the lowly heart,
And shepherds every thought;
We find Him not by seeking long,
We lose Him not unsought.

ONCE again we think of the practice of Christ's presence. Already we have read the great promise that assures our hearts that He is with us. Now we advance from the promise to the experience. To what part of the Scripture would you turn instinctively for a picture of the experience of Christ's presence during the day? I turn to the passage which, if I had been given the privilege of writing, I think I should have chosen to write sooner than anything else in the world—and that is the twenty-third Psalm.

The psalm was written long before Christ uttered His words on the mountains of Galilee,

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but such is the wonder of God's Word, and such the proof of the inspiration of Scripture, that the great words that the sacred writers wrote have often far greater meaning than they themselves understood.

In the previous chapter we had the promise of our Lord. To-day, as we turn to the psalm, where do we find the point of conjunction? In the centre of it, where there is a phrase that clicks into the other almost like a lock : " I am with you," says the Master ; " Thou art with me," answers the disciple. I hope we shall all be able to say it, not only as a matter of faith, but of experience.

We have been frequently told that the world is waiting until the Church shall speak the word for the present situation ; but really what the world needs is not *a* word, but *the* Word—the revelation of the glorious Lord in all His marvellous attributes. The Church too and all of us individually need it. May our prayers be abundantly answered, and Jesus stand among us every morning in His risen power !

Who is He that is to be present with us ? Already we have seen the Lord having all authority in heaven and in earth ; but we must remember

that that was Jesus. It was He who looked on the multitudes and yearned over them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd ; He who sought those who strayed, to bring them back ; and it was most fitting that, when He came into the world, the first to hear the message should be the shepherds, who kept watch over their flocks by night.

The thought of the Lord as the Shepherd was more constantly before the early Church than any other. They knew that they needed His care, and they believed that they had it. If you have been privileged to walk along the Catacombs, you will remember that nearly always the Lord is pictured as the Shepherd. That may be taken to mean that they feared to make any portrait of Him, but I think far more likely it was because they felt that they needed His love, His tenderness, His skill, His wisdom, and that they themselves were but as sheep, helpless without Him.

In that day the people of God were one in their common experience, and that is always the source of unity—not doctrine, for there we differ ; not ritual, for there we do not agree ; but we

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can all unite in blessed experience of Christ's loving presence. Though we may differ in many other things, there cannot be any disunion amongst the company where each can truly say, "The Lord is my Shepherd."

The early Christians were very daring. In the Catacombs and elsewhere they not only pictured the Shepherd with His sheep following and with the lambs in His arms, but they went so far as to imagine Him with a kid upon His shoulders. We know at last that the Great Judge will separate the sheep from the goats, but I think those saints of the early centuries got near the heart of the Lord when they represented the kid of the goats as being upborne by His love. He cares for the young people everywhere. The Good Shepherd heart goes out to the children and to all childlike souls.

How did He become our Shepherd? First of all, *He gave Himself for us*. He is the Good Shepherd because He gives His life for the sheep. He says, in a word that is deep in meaning, "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life for the sheep." I suggest to you the question: If the Father loves the Lord

Jesus because He laid down His life for the sheep, how much does the Father love the sheep? "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd!" The Shepherd was smitten, but then the Father brought Him again from the dead, "that Great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood of the everlasting covenant."

How did He become our Shepherd? He *found* us, and the picture of the search is given in the book of Ezekiel:

"Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I, even I, will both search My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out My sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. I will bring them out from the people. . . . I will feed them in a good pasture . . . and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God."

You see how the twenty-third Psalm fits in with that. It begins where the other leaves off: "I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord"; "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." So He finds us.

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Then He wins us, so that He can say, "You are *My* sheep," and we, looking up, can say, "Thou art *my* Shepherd—mine, mine, mine! My Shepherd!" He marks us all; and will you please remember that the mark is on the sheep, and not on the fold. If you ask me which is the true Church among all the varied and often competing Churches, I will say, None of them, and then I will say, All of them. The true Church is the assembly of God's flock.

Then on each He setteth
His own secret sign;
They that have My Spirit,
These, saith He, are Mine.

That is a children's hymn, but there is a wonderful truth in it.

The Lord is my Shepherd. The word for Lord is Jehovah—at least, the word that we pronounce as Jehovah. It is the unspeakable name, the name that the Jews did not breathe and never fully wrote. Consequently we do not know what it was. We know the consonants of it, but we only guess at the vowels. The Moderns tell us that the old vowels are wrong. I think we may retort that theirs are probably wrong too, for they guess, just as our fathers did.

But we need not be anxious to know how the word Jehovah or Yahweh is to be pronounced, because, though the New Testament was written by Jews, the name never occurs in it. Why is that? The answer that inevitably comes is that there is another name there that can be both written and pronounced which is the equivalent of the unpronounced and half-written name. Jesus is Jehovah. So in the light of the New Testament you can read the psalm with confidence—Jesus is my Shepherd—Jehovah-Jesus.

Then, since He is our Shepherd, He cares for us. Horace Bushnell says that Jesus is not the keeper of a hive of bees, knowing well the hive but not knowing any particular bee in it; but He is the keeper of a flock of sheep, not only knowing the flock, but every sheep in it. Mr. Moody used to have a suggestive bit which he was fond of repeating, as to how the shepherd knows the sheep. Someone asked a shepherd that question, and he laughed as he answered, "I know them all by their defects. You see that sheep has a bit out of its ear, and that sheep walks a little lame, and that sheep has lost a patch of wool: I know them by their defects."

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Even after our most rapturous experience, I think the Lord will know us by our defects. At best we are a lame lot.

But it is good to think that He knows us by our graces too—the graces He Himself has bestowed upon us. I was in a business meeting a few months ago where in a pause for praise and prayer a man sang with rapture in his face, eyes shut, and the glory shining through. He was quite unconscious of it, but I shall always remember that man in future by the transfiguring light of that moment. I think the Lord knows us too by the graces that He bestows upon us.

The Shepherd knows the sheep and *He cares for us and guards us*. We have three enemies against whom we must be protected: the wolf, that is the open enemy; the thief, that is the secret enemy; the hireling, that is the false friend. You have these set forth in the tenth chapter of John's Gospel, and the Lord our Shepherd can guard us from them all.

He calls us out. He knows our name, and we know His voice. It is not necessary for us to know any other voice than that of our Lord.

“ They know not the voice of strangers.” If some of you who are spending time in trying to understand and avoid the heresies of the day would but get more familiar with the Lord’s voice, most of your difficulties would be solved. If you know His voice well enough, it is not necessary to know others ; because you will always be able to recognise His when He calls. A great writer imagines Christ appearing to him, and the impress on his mind was so deep that he adds : “ Amongst ten thousand times ten thousand, I should know Him, and amidst the tumult of the universe I should hear the faintest whisper of His voice.” They know not the voice of strangers, but when Christ speaks His voice becomes delightfully familiar, rising clear and true above all the world.

Perhaps I have spent rather too much time on that first phrase in the psalm, but then really the whole psalm is in it. That little child was not far wrong when, asked to repeat it, she started out by saying, “ The Lord is my Shepherd ; that is all I want.” It is most true, the presence of the Shepherd is really all we want. The presence of Christ is a very simple thing, but it is wholly

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sufficient—Jehovah is my Shepherd ; that is all I want !

The message of the chapter, however, is chiefly this—the psalm is not only the expression of the saintly heart, but it is the history of a single day. The Lord Himself gives us a hint of this, almost a clue to it, in that Shepherd chapter in John where, as Godet points out, in the first six verses we have a morning picture, in the next four verses an afternoon picture, and in the eight verses that follow, an evening picture. In the twenty-third Psalm you have a picture of the whole day. Once you get hold of the clue, it is impossible to miss it.

The psalm itself suggests it, for at the end you have the words : “ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days.” That is to say, they will follow me every day just as they have followed me to-day. And, lest there should be any difficulty, it is said again—the dream being doubled, because the interpretation is sure—“ I will dwell in the house of the Lord for length of days ”—for ever ! If we are to practise Christ's presence, then here we may discover what our experience is to be.

First of all, there is the *waking consciousness*. Before the mist of sleep is from the eyes, you say to yourself in prospect of the day, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." But you will not be able to begin a day like that unless you end the previous day on the right note ; but if your last thought at night is of the Lord, then, after a holy night, whether sleeping or waking, when opening the eyes in the morning, you will be able to turn instinctively in adoring wonder to Him who is the Shepherd and your All in all, and say, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." Elizabeth Fry said that since she had known the Lord at eighteen years of age she had never waked one single morning without her first waking thought being, "How can I best serve my Master this day?" But better than any thought of my possible service is the assurance of His constant care.

Fairer than morning, lovelier than the daylight,
Dawns the sweet consciousness I am with Thee.

Then we go on to *the morning feast*. He calls His sheep out of the fold ; the green pastures are hard by, and into them He leads us. That is not the evening picture ; it is the experience

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of the dawn. It is a great mistake if you do not begin the day in calm—if you are so hurried in the morning that you cannot lie down in the green pastures. Every day we may be refreshed before the day's business starts. The Lord knows where the field is, and He has pitched the fold so that quite easily in the morning we can get to the pastures.

There He makes us lie down, compels us to rest, because we are more foolish than sheep, who instinctively accept their privilege. But neither sheep nor men will lie down until they are fed ! That is the whole secret of rest, and the cause of hurry and worry is always an unsatisfied heart. With that we start ; with that, and quite surely, our faith is justified, and He the Shepherd is justified too. “ He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.”

Wherever He may guide me,
No want shall turn me back,
My Shepherd is beside me,
And nothing can I lack.
His wisdom ever waketh,
His sight is never dim,
He knows the way He taketh,
And I will walk with Him !

After the rest of the morning we enter on

the duties of the day. Not only have we our personal delight, but we go out to the service of the world. We walk through the dusty highways, until presently there comes *the noontide refreshing*: "He leadeth me beside the still waters." Not by the rushing stream, which would make the sheep afraid, but by some pool or well, prepared in advance and reserved for the purpose. The Shepherd knew it was there, and fixed the day's journey so that when the sun was hottest we should come to the cooling stream. Let us be grateful for these quiet resting-places in life's plan.

I remember that it was at noon that the Lord sat thus on the well and the woman of Samaria came to Him, and He led her by the still waters. Where the Lord Himself is, the waters never lack, for He Himself is the great fountain of life.

There are some of you to whom the name of Thomas Comber will be familiar as one of the pioneers of the Congo. He gave his life to Christ, and died on shipboard on the way home, his last words being :

Oh, Christ He is the fountain,
The deep, sweet well of love !
The streams on earth I've tasted,—

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and then his spirit went to the Lord. I have no doubt he finished the verse as he entered the land where the Lamb, who is the Shepherd of Glory, leads His flock still to living fountains of waters—"More deep I'll drink above." "He leadeth me beside the still waters."

Then there is *the midday pause*: "He restoreth my soul." Men and women, we need to know more the blessing of pause in our Christian life. In these days of stress and flurry we are apt to think that we can only serve by always rushing and shouting. Believe me, you will do far more if you learn what the nightingale knows—the beauty of the pause.

We need to pause because of the morning's way, we need to pause because of the noonday heat, we need to pause because of the afternoon's service yet to be rendered. "He restoreth my soul." That does not mean that He brings us back from wandering, but that our strength is naturally weakening, and we must wait to have it renewed.

I know a business committee that meets at intervals, and in the middle of the meeting there is wisely interjected a space for intercession.

Some practical people who meet for the business, Christian men all of them, have not hesitated to say that it is lost time. "We are busy men," they say, "and can only stay so long; why spend so much time in prayer?" Yielding to their judgment, we have tried the experiment, and have found that if we proceed without the intercession, we do not get through the business in the appointed time; but if we pause, we gain an alacrity of spirit that enables us to get through before the hour is over. It is so much easier, when you get your soul restored at midday, to go on with the work that awaits you afterwards. This is not only scientifically correct, it is spiritually delightful. At midday He restoreth my soul!

Then there comes *the afternoon progress*: "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness." That is the first active word in the psalm. We have to climb the hills to go on to the next appointment. "He leads"—He takes the difficult task. It is difficult for me to follow over these rough places, but far more difficult for Him to lead. He goes before, and I follow.

"He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness." That is to say, He leadeth me in right paths.

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If we keep company with Christ, we need not trouble about the way we go. We are not responsible for choosing the way. We are indeed still responsible for our life, but with the Shepherd before us it is a different responsibility from that which would be ours if we were alone. We are only responsible for following and for obeying—not for choosing, not for trying, amidst a variety of ways, to find the path that we should take ; but simply to know where the Shepherd leads, and then to go after Him—wondering at His perfect knowledge, His unerring wisdom, and His marvellous skill. He leads me in rightness. He teaches me to do right things. We are to follow holiness, for without holiness no man shall see the Lord, but—if you will allow me to suggest it—I think that in following holiness we sometimes forget that we must follow righteousness too. Mr. Gladstone said a thing which I constantly remember : “ In many ways, some of them great, some of them little, but all of them subtle, we are daily tempted to allow our religion to spoil our morality.” But such disaster will never befall you if you keep near to the Good Shepherd ; for He, the Holy

One, will lead you in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. So you say every day, "O Shepherd, be true to Thy name, honour Thy name, and bring me into the paths of righteousness. Thy guidance will be like Thy choice of me, all of grace—not for my name's sake, but for Thine."

At length there comes *the evening danger*—we must go into the valley of the shadow of death. This is not the picture of death—it is only death's shadow. It is quite allowable for us to think of it as going across into the other country, but every day we are called to go into the valley of the shadow of death. I think, indeed, the whole nation is there to-day. Death's wings overshadow us. The great chasm or glen or cañon lies before us as the shadows lengthen, and we have to pass through it in the gloaming. The Shepherd did not take us through it at noontide, it would have been like a furnace; nor at night, it would be too dangerous; nor alone, for the way is hard to find; but with Him we venture into it boldly. Robbers and wild beasts are there, our enemies are round about us; and yet, because we go with the

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Shepherd, we do not run through the valley ; in perfect confidence we walk through amid the slanting shadows.

It is a great art to learn to walk through the shadowy places. Do not hurry ; there are lessons to be learned in the shadow that can never be learned in the light. You will discover something about His ministries you never knew before. His rod and His staff they will comfort you—the one to guide, the other to protect you, and the sheep that are nearest will know the most of both. Dr. Thomson, in *The Land and the Book*, tells us that he always noticed that the sheep that kept closest to the shepherd were the fattest, because they found first the little patches of succulent grass where he trod.

We will understand His ministries in the shadow, but there is something even greater to be discovered there. We shall know more of the Lord Himself : in the valley of the shadow we come nearest to the Shepherd. One of the most beautiful things in the psalm is the change of pronoun. Up to this time we have been speaking of the Shepherd in the third person—He, He, He ;

but when we go into the valley of the shadow of death we come so near Him that we look into His face and say, not "*He* is with me,"—that is too formal, too far away,—but "*Thou* art with me." We gaze at Him all the time, as we say, "Thou, Thou, Thou art with me!" The Lord whispers to me, "I am with you," and I draw closer to Him and whisper back, "Thou art with me." It was in the valley of the shadow that Samuel Rutherford said: "I find Christ the most steadable friend and companion in the world to me now. The need and the usefulness of Christ is seen best in trials. O if He be not worthy of His room! Lodge Him in house and heart." Welcome any darkness that leads to such disclosures of His grace.

I thought His love would weaken,
As more and more He knew me;
But it burneth like a beacon,
And its light and heat go through me
And I ever hear Him say,
As He goes along His way:
"O silly souls, come near Me,
My sheep should never fear Me,
I am the Shepherd true."

And so, "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for

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Thou art with me ; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

And now there comes *the sunset grace*. Still keep to the metaphor of the sheep. The author of the psalm was too good an artist to change his simile midway, and if he was not, the Spirit who inspired him gave us a consistent picture. We have gone through the valley of shadow, we have emerged, but the enemies are still on the heights. We cannot fight, but we can feast. We leave the fighting to the Shepherd. The things we cannot do He will do for us, as we reminded ourselves in the first chapter. He has prepared the table. His loving foresight is revealed. He knew that green patch was there and He led us to it. That is why it was necessary to go through the valley of the shadow of death. True, our enemies are still about us, but we fear them not, because the Shepherd is near. This is the sunset grace !

Now, in the brief Eastern fall of the day, there comes the *twilight healing* : " Thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over." While we have been feasting, the fold has been preparing, and the Shepherd stands at the gate with the

great pitcher of water and the vial of oil. The sheep that are weary or wounded have the head anointed with the healing oil as they enter the fold, and to all He holds the great brimming pitcher, that they may drink. Never evade the Shepherd at nightfall. Come near to Him, and you will find that He has an evening grace for you day by day.

Whoever translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, whether the Seventy of Alexandria, or others, changed this part of the psalm, putting into it a bit of their own experience. They make it read, "Thine intoxicating cup cheers me like the best wine." They knew what it was to have the exhilaration of God's presence, those saints of the olden time, and though they marred the metaphor by their translation, they gave us a glimpse of their inner life. The Lord's cup at eventide, whether of wine or of water, is brimful of delight; there is no stint in His supply and no limit to its ecstasy. The cup runs over, and we quaff it with eagerness. Perhaps we get nearer to our Lord in the gloaming than at any other time. I do not blame those old men of Alexandria who said that the Shepherd's

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cup is like the best wine. It is a joyful thing to be intoxicated like that at nightfall.

Of course, this psalm which mirrors one day of life may be a picture of a whole life-day. There is the morning triumph of the young convert who says, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want"; then comes the early joyance of the Christian life—the green pastures and still waters. Afterwards, the pause in life, the establishment of character in the way of righteousness, the maturing faith, and the final triumph. But let us still keep to it as a picture of one day.

We have had the cup and the oil at the gate. Now we are lying in the fold, and there comes *the night assurance*. All day long I have been thinking that I have been following, but now, in review of the day, I find that I have been followed: "Goodness and mercy have followed me." During the day I did not look back, and therefore did not notice it, but in review at nightfall I see "goodness and mercy"! Someone calls them "the Shepherd's dogs." They have been guarding me, all unconscious as I was of their service. This too is the Shepherd's grace.

Harry Moorhouse, that little man who taught

Moody about the love of God, said something the first time I heard him that I have never forgotten : " The Shepherd is responsible for the sheep, not the sheep for the Shepherd." The worst of it is that we sometimes think we are both the Shepherd and the sheep, and that we have both to guide and to follow. Happy are we when we realise that He is responsible, that He goes before and goodness and mercy follow. These are the two pivotal points of the Epistle to the Romans : The goodness of God leads us to repentance, and His mercy calls us to give ourselves a living sacrifice, which is our reasonable service. Goodness and mercy follow us.

But that is not all. Doubly assured because of another day's experience, I say, " Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." The future tenses of this psalm are worthy of note : " I shall not want . . . I will fear no evil . . . goodness and mercy shall follow me." We are assured that the Shepherd who has cared for us through the troubles and dangers of this day will never fail us, and so to-morrow and all days we shall have goodness and mercy follow us still.

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We lie down to rest in the fold, but ere we pass into unconscious renewal there is *the sleeping resolve*. I venture to guess that the translator of this psalm was a Scotsman, for Scotsmen are so hopelessly astray in their "shalls" and "wills"! There is no reason in the text why the word "will" should be used at the end of the psalm, instead of the word "shall" as at the beginning. The proper translation is, "I shall dwell"; but I think whoever wrote it first must have been guided by the Spirit when he used the expression "I will." It is not only an assurance at the end of the day as my eyes are closing, not only, "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever," but it is an evening determination, a night resolve: "I have been so satisfied to-day that I *will* dwell in the Lord's house for ever, never desiring any other."

If you end the night like that, you will begin in the morning with, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." The waking assurance shall be the echo of the night resolve, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

And so I sleep because He wakes, I trust because He watches, and beneath the purple

sky, studded with diamond stars, there is peace. I know that the Shepherd will be there in the morning, and I know too that He will not be missing in that other morning which for me some day will dawn beyond the stars.

John x. 17 ; Zechariah xiii. 7 ; Ezekiel xxxiv. 11-15 ;
John x. 1-6, 7-10, 11-18.

III
THE EXPRESSION

Dean Hole tells an incident which he had from the man who tried the experiment. "In a London drawing-room a sceptic approached with an expression of cheerful scorn upon his countenance and said, 'I've been wondering how you Christians can expect us rational men to accept your doctrines when you are so hopelessly divided amongst yourselves. I see here to-night English Churchmen, High, Broad, and Low, a Roman Catholic, a Greek Churchman, a Presbyterian, a Wesleyan, a Baptist, a Congregationalist, an Irvingite, a Quaker—where and what is Truth?'

" 'If I can obtain our host's permission to make the experiment which has come into my thought,' " his informant said, " 'you shall see what I have to say as an answer to Pilate's question.'

"Permission was given, silence followed, and those present were asked to give serious attention to a few words of supreme importance.

" 'I appeal to you in the cause of our common Christianity, and I solemnly call on those who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Son of Mary, that He came into the world, was made flesh, was crucified to save sinners, that He rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven, ever liveth to make intercession for us, and will come again at the end of the world to judge the quick and the dead,—I ask you to kneel and repeat with me the prayer He has taught us.'

"They all knelt but one."

III

THE EXPRESSION

I waited : He is come. Oh, I have dreamed
Of Him and doubted ; now I understand,—
In all the days it was His glory gleamed,
In all the darkness I have touched His hand.

IN the practice of Christ's presence our experience will always demand expression. Emotion is to be followed by motion ; knowledge by acknowledgment ; faith by prayer. It is impossible to keep company with our Lord without praying ; and, indeed, the only way to learn to pray is as we are taught by the Lord, who Himself is our great High Priest and mighty Intercessor. He has already given us, in words familiar to us all, both the model and the vehicle for our supplications.

He gave the prayer twice : first in ordered discourse, and then, when some of John's disciples came late for school, He gave the lesson again.

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We have the full prayer in Matthew. It will not be necessary for me to read it, because we are familiar with the words ; though I know a great many people who, perhaps because of that familiarity, cannot trust themselves in public to repeat the prayer.

It is generally called " The Lord's Prayer," and rightly so ; for it is a prayer that can only be truly prayed in company with the Lord Jesus : we must have His personal presence as we are praying ; it is He who puts the words daily into our mouth. He does not pray the prayer with us. He cannot pray, " Forgive us our sins " ; for the great miracle of Christ's life, the greatest miracle, was that He was sinless. Yet by His mighty sacrifice He joins us even there, in that " He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

You will notice that the Lord takes it for granted that we are going to pray. He does not say " if ye pray," but " when ye pray." He takes it for granted that we are going to pray every day ; without directly instructing us to do it, in the pattern prayer that He gives us,

there is a petition that will only last for a day. Like a true teacher, He suggests the way and expects us to follow. He tells us to avoid "vain repetitions," and yet He exhorts us to pray "after this manner"; but even if we use this form it will never become a vain repetition, because we are to use it in His august presence, with the sense of His nearness all the while.

This is a prayer for the disciples of Christ. At the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount we read that the multitudes gathered to Christ, but the disciples went apart with Christ, and He taught them to pray. It is not the prayer for the worldling, it is the prayer for the sons of God: "After this manner pray ye."

It is, too, the prayer for the present time. Some of my brethren think it was for the past time, and some that it is for the future, not to be prayed until the kingdom shall be established on the earth. I suggest that when the Lord taught His disciples to pray it was for all time, and it is therefore our prayer for our time, as well as for the past and the future.

It is the prayer to be prayed on the mount. The Lord went up into the mountain, and when

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He was set He prayed. You will be able to pray it truly as you go into the mountain with Him, and have His sunlight in your soul.

When are we to pray it? In the morning, because we are asking for something that is needed for the day. But is it to be used only in the morning? As the Jewish day begins at sunset, you can imagine our Lord going into the mountain after nightfall, and in view of the coming dawn saying, "Give us this day our daily bread," and so it is a prayer for the night as well as for the day.

The prayer is therefore for the whole life. It is not a prayer to be prayed by Christ's disciples in specific intervals of the day, but at any time, as they live in His presence, all through their lives, with a new content poured into it every day.

There are three things that stand evident in this prayer—its simplicity, its brevity, and its finality. It is quite simple: it is the prayer for childhood, our little ones lisp it, and not less the prayer for the maturest old age. It is brief. I think our Lord would suggest to us that true prayer will generally be brief. Dr. Arnot as he grew older became more brief and simple in his

prayers. He says: "I suppose there are really two kinds of brevity in prayer—one because you are *far off*, and the other because you are *far in*."

Dr. Maclaren when he was dying was greatly encouraged by having read to him some words of Thomas Carlyle that he wrote to Erskine of Linlathen. Carlyle says he waked one morning before the dawn, and though for years he had not been accustomed to pray this prayer, he thought he saw it written on the darkness. And he said: "I never felt before how intensely the voice of man's soul is in it, the inmost aspiration of all that is high and pious in poor human nature, right worthy to be recommended with an 'after this manner pray ye.'"

Dr. Thirtle makes a suggestion which I think is worthy of consideration, and is probably justified, when he directs our attention to two passages of Scripture: "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father"; and "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." He argues, by repeated reference to the Old

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Testament, that our cry is our prayer, and that "Abba, Father," directs attention to the Lord's Prayer. Just as a minister might announce, "Let us sing 'Praise God,'" and you would know that he meant us to sing the doxology, the first words directing us to the familiar lines that follow. So when the Spirit of adoption comes into our hearts, He teaches us to pray, "Abba, Father"; that is, to use intelligently, and as in the presence of Christ, the Christian form which our Lord gave to us long ago, which to us is always more than a form because it is inspired by the Spirit of the Highest.

We cannot pray aright unless the Spirit of the Son teaches us. Here we draw no distinction between the Spirit of Jesus and Jesus Himself; because really it is by His Spirit that He is present with us, and the Spirit ever assumes it as His great prerogative to glorify Jesus Christ.

You will notice that there is no praise in this prayer, that there is nothing here for extraordinary times or special occasions. It is rather the common aspiration of all the children of God at all times, the prayer not for high days but for all days. We may add to it all our extra-

ordinary petitions, and bring to it our bursts of glad hosannas. The early Church felt that, and hence they added, "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory." I think we all want to add something to the prayer.

Praise is more divine than prayer ;
Prayer points the happy road to heaven,
Praise is already there.

We shall not therefore finish our prayer without praise nor without some note of adoration. None of us will like to adopt the Revised Version here, else our prayer will end with the devil : we shall like to go a little further before we pause. Therefore we may welcome the final doxology of the Authorised text.

This prayer, while not for extraordinary occasions, gives a foothold to every man that has faith in Christ. It is final : here we rest, as in the psalm of the previous chapter. It is the house of the Lord in which we dwell for ever, and truly we may say to the Lord at our side, "They that dwell in Thy house will still be praising Thee." Within these boundaries we are satisfied.

To me it is the Palace of Prayer in which I would abide for ever, in which all my needs are

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to be so richly supplied that I shall never desire to go elsewhere. It has at either end a great dome—the one an Observatory, the other an Oratory. “ Our Father who art in heaven ” the one, and the other “ Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory.” Then there are nine great halls, and there are two staircases.

I am not sure whether you have an architectural mind enough to follow the plan, or whether I have a lucid enough mind to describe it ; but if you will begin at either end, there are first two rooms on the ground floor, then there are two rooms one above the other, while in the centre there is an archway, with a room above it. Perhaps you have not got hold of that, so we will begin again. Start in the middle this time. There is an archway with a room over it. Beside it on the right and on the left there are two rooms one above the other, then on each side two rooms on the ground floor, and at the ends the great domes. The word “ as ” shall be the staircases. In the first part of the prayer you have the words, “ Thy will be done on earth *as* it is in heaven,” and in the second part you have “ Forgive us our trespasses *as* we forgive

those who trespass against us." You go up by the first and down by the second.

You see that the Lord takes it for granted that we are going to pray about His things before we pray about our own. He does not tell us to do it, He takes it for granted. That is the best way to get a thing done, as it is the chief art of teaching and preaching. When we are too emphatic, we disclose our doubt whether people are going to do what we say. Take it for granted and pass on. For one thing, that will shorten our sermons! The first broad lesson is, then, that the Lord's things will be before our things, the Father's concerns before the children's needs.

Very solemnly I ask the question, whether that is how we pray? I confess that I find myself constantly erring here. I come before the Lord hurriedly, and pray for my own things; and if I pray for His things at all, it is just at the fag end of my prayer, sometimes perhaps forgetting the things of the Kingdom altogether. The true prayer is first for the Father's things, and then the things of the child. Believe me, true prayer is not the hurried utterance of stray

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desires, but a definite and reverent expression of the whole life—such as trembles in the sentence, “John Knox, with deliberate mind to his God.”

Believing that our Lord used language carefully, and that the very words He gave are inspired, it is well to notice a significant difference between the first part and the second part of this prayer. The three petitions concerning the Father's things stand separate and apart. There does not seem to be any door leading from one room into the other : “Thy kingdom come”—period. “Hallowed be Thy name”—period. “Thy will be done on earth”—full stop. But when you come to our things it is different. The door is wide open between each room : “Give us this day our daily bread, *and* forgive us our trespasses, *and* lead us not into temptation, *but* deliver us from evil.” The explanation possibly is that the Name, the Kingdom, and the Will are each different phases of the same thought, if one petition is granted all are granted ; whereas, concerning ourselves, we need the multiplied blessings represented by the added requests : bread is not enough apart from forgiveness, nor

pardon enough without deliverance from temptation and from evil.

Come with me into these rooms. First of all, let us go into the great dome at this end of the Palace—Observatory or Oratory, I scarce know which. As we look toward the skies, we begin with "Father"! Remember that it is the Lord Jesus who is teaching us, that He Himself is by our side when He teaches. He does not ask us to pray to Himself, though we may pray to the Lord Jesus if we will! If you are quite sure you are in close contact with Him, you may perhaps be allowed to say, "Dear Jesus!" but I am scared when I hear people praying like that. It sounds like an echo of an old prayer rather than the expression of a present experience. But the common prayer of the saints is not addressed to the Christ within us but to the Father above. Our Lord bids us as sons to go straight to the Father, "for the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me." If, then, we love Christ, we pray to the Father. We may pray to the Spirit too. Often I find myself driven to receive the Spirit anew in time of need, and to call upon the Holy

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Paraclete for help ; but the filial thought should be uppermost in prayer. We must never lose the emphasis on the individual Fatherhood of God. In these days when the universal Fatherhood is so often proclaimed, it is well to remember that the relation between the regenerate soul and God is different from the relationship between God and the soul that is unregenerate. A great deal of confusion results from the use of the same word to express the two different things. It is when we receive Jesus that we have power to become children of God ; and it is those who receive Jesus and company with Him who have power to pray this prayer. It is His presence that gives us the assurance of our sonship and the right to say " Father."

In Christian biography, you will find that the saints in their deepest moments turn to the Father, often seeming content just to mention His name. One of the most recent narratives tells us of a simple soul in the countryside who at the close of the day looked up to heaven and said, " Thank ye, Father," and in the same simple yet reverent strain looked up in the morning and said in his Ulster dialect, " Morra, Father,

how's all up aroun' th' throne this mornin' ? ”
 But if we emphasise our personal relationship in Christ to God, we do not forget those who share with us the eternal life. Prayer joins us to all the saints, and makes vocal our unity. So we say, “ Our Father ! ” Yours and mine.

“ Our Father which art in heaven.” And where is heaven ? Wherever it is, it is somewhere beyond and above us. Though we believe in the immanence of God in each believer, it is to the God transcendent we make petition and offer homage. Our Father, past us, beyond us, in heaven, wherever heaven may be. And it may not be far away. Our Lord tells us to go into the secret chamber, and there, with the shut door, we may believe that

Heaven comes down our soul to greet,
 And glory crowns the mercy-seat.

Heaven is an old Saxon word, heave-en—lifted up ; and when you pray, you yourself are heaved up, you rise to a diviner air, and God descends to you, and there is the blessed fellowship between Father and son which not even angels can enjoy.

Now come into these rooms. And let me say

that each of them is a college and a shrine, in each there is something that we must learn and something we must offer ; something we must receive and something we must give. First, then, we enter the room of the Name—"Hallowed be Thy name." It is the name of the Father that is upon our heart, the Father's name we desire to be glorified. The name in itself means all that He is ; but to me, all that I know about Him. If my name is mentioned to you, it does not mean much, probably only a man that preaches or writes ; but when it is mentioned to my wife, it means more than that, because she knows more about me than you do. And the name of the Lord is all that I know about Him. I pray, therefore, that I may know more about Him—"Hallowed be Thy name." And if the name represents all that He is, then I pray that His glory may be more evident, that more may know the name and honour it. If you ask whether the Father's glory can be greater, I answer that though the sun cannot be brighter the clouds may be less. That is what we learn here of the glory of the name.

What do we give ? There is an altar in

every room, and in this we offer our own name upon the altar. You will see that it is not quite so easy to pray this prayer as you fancied. You cannot get through even this room without saying, Henceforth it is Thy name, not my name, that is to be honoured. He must increase, I must decrease. Here I lay my reputation as an offering and seek to be cured of the itch for publicity, the craving after advertisement, the desire for renown. In this room of peace we learn to scorn the place of fame. The first thing when I pray to the Father is not, then, that I may have a name, but that His name may be glorified—"Hallowed be Thy name."

That lesson might be enough for us, but our hearts crave more, so we go into the next room—"Thy kingdom come." Here we learn of God's claim on us and on all men. The Father has a kingdom, and the Lord is the King; so we say spontaneously, even before we think of anything we need, before we think of our own failure, or before we are assured that our sins are forgiven, "Thy kingdom come." We say it, anxious that His kingdom should come, even though we should not be forgiven, more anxious for His reign

than for our own deliverance and exaltation, honouring His law, and not desiring that a jot of it should be bated even though it condemn us.

“Thy kingdom come” means, first, that it may come in our own hearts. A friend of mine was once asked to visit a drunkard. He had called at his house on several previous occasions, but the man had always slipped out at the back door when he came to the front. So he entered into a sacred conspiracy with the man's wife, and one day she sent him word that her husband had been drunk and pawned his clothes, and could not leave the house. My friend went to see him. They confronted each other, and for some moments neither spoke. His visitor broke the silence and urged him to change masters ; and after a while they knelt, and prayer was offered on his behalf. Without rising, my friend said, “John Fish, pray for yourself.” Again there was silence, only broken by the hard breathing of the sinner. “John Fish, pray for yourself. God will hear your prayer.” And at length, in broken sentences, he began, “Our Father—which art—in heaven.—Hallowed be—Thy name.—Thy kingdom come——” There he broke down, but

the kingdom which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost came into the man's heart.

But while it is permissible to use the petition in that sense, its scope is far greater. We pray that the kingdom may come the world over, the universe over ; that the rule and reign of the Lord may be extended, until all nations and the whole earth are under His governance.

Praying thus, I shall seek to understand how the kingdom is coming, and shall be alert to see the signs of the answer to my prayer. Some of us perhaps believe that the kingdom is coming gradually, by the spread of light, and that then the King Himself will come ; others, and I confess that I am among them, believe that the King will come and usher in the kingdom. But the chief thing is, do you believe that the kingdom is coming ? Do you believe it so much that whether the Lord comes at that end or this, you pray for it every day before you even ask for your own things ? If you do, then you will offer on the altar in this room your own plans and ambitions. This is getting harder. If my ambition is to see His kingdom come, I must not

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go about trying to establish a kingdom for myself. I cannot seek lordship for myself if my chief desire is to crown Him Lord of all. My schemes and prides I lay upon the altar.

Now we go into the third room, the room of the Will—the room generally draped in crape when it ought to be garlanded with flowers. We learn here, if we are learning truly, that God's will is our weal, His plan our peace. Someone went into a lady's house, and found her with her head bent on the table. When she raised it, it was evident she had been weeping. Her friend tried to comfort her, but she answered, "I have been trying to say the Lord's Prayer, and I cannot get through it." Then she opened her heart, and said that though she had prayed it thousands of times in the bright, glad days, the words rippling from her lips like music, in this day, when the dear presence had been taken away from her side, she never got further than "Thy will——"; and she could not say, "Thy will be done."

But oh, my friends, you may take the crape away from this prayer if you remember that the will of God is not a passive but an

active thing. You do not say, "Thy will be borne," but "Thy will be done."

Not in dumb resignation we lift our hands on high,
Not like the nerveless fatalist, content to do and die;
Our faith springs like the eagle, who soars to meet the
sun,
And cries exulting unto Thee, "O Lord, Thy will be
done."

There is a great deal of resignation that is almost mutiny. We say, "It is God's will, and of course we shall have to bear it, because we cannot do anything else," and we are resigned; but in our heart of hearts we wish it were otherwise, and we would change it if we could. If we turn to the Christ who is beside us, we shall see that we are called not to be resigned in the Lord's will, but to delight in it. He said to the Father, "Lo, I come. I delight to do Thy will, O Lord"; and in following the Father's plan He declared, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." The illustration is given of a steamer on a river. It is going against the current. That is like a man rebelling against God's will—His will this way, and yours that way. Presently the steam is shut off, and the steamer floats down the current: that is a man resigned to God's will.

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The current takes him where it will. By and by the steamer turns round and goes with the current full steam ahead. That is a man delighting in God's will ; his will not annihilated, but co-operating in all its strength with God's will, so that he can say with an old saint, " God does what He pleases, and I do what pleases Him."

When we learn that, we approach the altar in this room and offer up our own will. And so the prayer gets more difficult still ; but the difficulty is only apparent, for the delight increases as we go from room to room. Henry Martyn says : " When I can say, ' Thy will be done, teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God,' it is like throwing ballast out of a balloon, my soul ascends immediately, and light and happiness shine around me." And John Woolman, whose *Journal* is one of the great books of the Christian life, says : "When our minds entirely yield to Christ, that silence is known which followeth the opening of the last of the seals. In this silence we learn abiding in the Divine will, and then feel that we have no cause to promote but that only in which the Light of Life directs us in our proceedings." Oh for the

silence that follows the opening of the seventh seal—the yielding up our wills to the Lord !

Laid on Thine altar, O my Lord divine,
Accept this day my gift for Jesus' sake.
I have no jewels to adorn Thy shrine,
Nor any world-famed sacrifice to make ;
But here I bring within my trembling hand
This will of mine. A thing that seemeth small ;
And only Thou, dear Lord, canst understand
That when I yield Thee this, I yield Thee all.
It hath been wet with tears and dimmed with sighs,
Clenched in my grasp, till beauty it hath none.
Now from Thy footstool, where it vanquished lies,
The prayer ascendeth : " Let Thy will be done."
Take it, O Father, e'er my courage fail,
And blend it so with Thine own will, that e'en
If in some desperate hour my cry prevail,
And Thou giv'st back my gift, it may have been
So changed, so purified, so fair have grown,
So one with Thee, so filled with peace divine,
I may not know, nor feel it as my own.
But gaining back my will may find it Thine !

When we know what the will of God is, surely we shall not hesitate to pray this prayer with emphasis : " This is the will of God, even your sanctification "—" Thy will be done ! " " It is not the will of My Father that one of these little ones should perish "—" Thy will be done ! " " Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you "—" Thy will be done !

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We ascend the stairway to learn the full meaning of it. There is room above room—"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." How is the will of the Father done up there? I cannot explain it better than by telling a story about a teacher, who asked a class that question. One thought the angels did God's will perfectly, and another that they did it cheerfully, while another thought they did it every day. There was a little mite at the back of the class who was silent, but when pressed she said she thought they did it without asking any questions. That is how it is done in heaven, and that is how it is to be done on earth. So take away the crape, and let us rejoice in the will of God.

Clouds have silver linings,
Says the proverb old;
When we live with Jesus,
They are lined with gold.

We advance to the next room. This is a high prayer—"Give us this day our daily bread." It seems a descent at first from prayer about the will, and that is why I ask you to put it above the archway, that we may always keep it as sacred. There is nothing higher to us in this life than the giving of our bodies to the Lord,

and that implies that the daily bread is to be sanctified. This petition naturally follows the last, for if we are to do God's will on earth, it is evident that He must give us our daily bread, and keep us alive here. Without bread for the body we may do His will somewhere else, perhaps, but certainly not on earth.

Of course bread means all necessary things. When you have your morning meal, it's not always just meal, as the word "meal" includes all necessary things. And when we pray, "Give us our daily bread," the word "bread" includes all the necessary things too—the things our Father sees to be necessary, and He is very tender and pitiful and gracious. He remembers our frame and often gives us a stray bit of butter on the bread.

What are we to offer here? Our possessions, so that we shall count everything we have as His. Is the prayer getting more difficult? How can a man say, "Give us this day our daily bread," when he has his bread in the cupboard? Quite easily, because the cupboard too is the Lord's. When I put my hand in the cupboard, I find the Lord's bread, none the less His because He let

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me store it for Him there yesterday. The bread itself comes from His hand.

We must remember to pray in the plural: "Give us this day our daily bread." The Lord who is our Companion in the Palace of Prayer also walks in and out among the people, is seeking the needy on the earth to-day, and caring for them, and if I say, "Give us this day our daily bread," I too must think of those dear to Him and consider the poor if I desire to have the blessing of the Lord.

In the next room we learn to say, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Forgive us in the heavenly places as we forgive them in the earthly places. We descend the stairway, and find in our own ways on earth an argument to plead with the Father in heaven. That is not difficult, because we are accustomed to forgive people. It is not that in my prayer I seek to make terms with God. It is not that I say, "I have forgiven my debtor and therefore I claim that Thou shouldest forgive me," not that at all! But I interpret the Father's heart by my own. I am a father; I forgive my children, I delight to forgive them, I make

excuses to forgive them ; I may be stern with the fault, but I look all the while for the least inkling of regret on their part, the least occasion on my own, to make it up. That is the father's heart, and my Father in heaven forgives my trespasses as I forgive those who trespass against me.

True, I must have the forgiving spirit. The Lord emphasises this in the following verses : " If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." I cannot be taught by Christ to pray this petition without insensibly drinking in the Christly spirit, and learning the depth of pity that prompted Him to say, " Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do."

Let me also say that whatever may be my experience in the saintly life, I never for a single day get beyond the need of forgiveness. There is no such thing in this life as sinless perfection. We are always coming short. There are always debts to be forgiven, but, thank God, there is always forgiveness with Him that He may be feared.

It is a great thing to start the day as a for-

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given sinner ; and it is gloriously possible. Many Christian lives are frustrate because of the lack of this daily assurance. There are some unreconciled to God, with perhaps some great crimson blot in the past the thought of which keeps them from service for Christ and from open confession of His name. That is perhaps the reason why some who may read these words are not ardent in Christ's service : you think you cannot get away from your sin ! But you can. This is the argument : if He answers one part of this prayer, I may be sure that He has answered it all. Has He given me daily bread ? Yes. Then I say to my heart, the Lord that gave me my daily bread has also forgiven my sins. He has answered both petitions, and the answer to the first is His seal for the second. I go downstairs in the morning to start afresh. When the odour of the coffee on the table greets me on the stairs, it is the assurance of the answer to the whole prayer. Is not that delightful ? All the evil past gone, gone on Calvary when He died for me, and cleansed me in His blood ; gone to-day when I confess my sins. As surely as He has given me food, He has given me

release. He is a giving and a forgiving God !

What shall I offer on the altar here ? My rights. I cannot go forth having my great debt forgiven and straightway lay hold of my fellow-servant by the throat, and say to him, " Pay me what thou owest." It is not always right to stand on my rights, it is sometimes the wrongest thing I can do. If God had stood on His rights with me, I should have been undone. He has forgiven, I must be willing also to bear patiently the wrongs of others against me. It is a great moment in Christian experience when I learn to surrender for Christ's sake things I might else lawfully claim. That is the perfection of prayer in this room.

In the next room we learn to pray, " Lead us not into temptation." There may be a road that is perilous to us, and we are not self-sufficient enough to go there without being quite sure of His leading. So far from that, we daily beg to be spared the test if it be possible. We assume that He will not lead us to face some problems in life, of ethics or of expediency, if any other way will suffice ; this is especially our confidence in

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things that have been snares to us in the past.

There was a woman reclaimed from intemperance, and someone said to her, "Do you ever touch drink?" "Drink!" she said; "whenever I think of drink I fall on my knees and pray." There are some things from which we must flee if we are to be safe. However old you are, you never get beyond that. The best of us walk daily along the edge of a precipice, but He who walks with us always walks on the precipice side.

Here we must offer up all the doubtful things in life. If I were to launch out on them, the category would be endless—I mean mine would be. If I mentioned them, you might say that yours are not included. But the Spirit will mention yours. Things allowable to me may be wrong for you, or your safe things may be dangerous to me; if a thing is doubtful, let me renounce it, lest it should become a sin. While we recognise that we shall always be sinners, yet we may get as near perfection as we can,—the nearer the better, as long as we are aware there is always something to confess and to be forgiven,—but certainly we must not rush into temptation

after having prayed that we may not be led into it.

The last room gives us the extra prayer : “ But deliver us from evil.” I prefer to look upon this petition as separate from the last, and hence think of it as another room. Evil is something more than temptation. There is a whole territory where the Evil One has sway, and where we are not called upon to go, save for the rescue of others. But because we may be called to adventure into the place where Satan’s seat is, we pray, “ Deliver us from evil.” Even here we never go alone. Christ is with us : He is the mighty Deliverer, and He delivers magnificently.

As we pray, we lay ourselves on the altar. This is the greatest offering of all. Already I have offered my name, my ambitions, my will, my body, my rights, and doubtful things. Now ere I end the prayer I yield myself without reserve. If aught has been withheld or reserved it must be put on the altar. So we find that we have to live this prayer if we are going to pray it. It is the man who lives that prays. You cannot live as one man and pray as another.

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To pray prevailingly, you have to bring your life into harmony with the prayer ; and the way to do that is to keep your life in harmony with the Lord who teaches all His saints. Having His presence day by day, it becomes more and more joyous to dwell in this great palace that He has built for us.

Then we end with the mighty ascription of praise : “ Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever ; Amen,” and again we look out to the skies.

Matthew vi. 9-13 ; 2 Corinthians v. 21 ; Romans viii. 15 ; Galatians iv. 6 ; Psalm lxxxiv. 4 ; John xvi. 17, i. 12 ; John iii. 30 ; Romans xiv. 17 ; Psalm xl. 7, 8 ; John iv. 34 ; 1 Thessalonians iv. 3 ; Matthew xviii. 14 ; 1 Thessalonians v. 16-18 ; Luke xxiii. 34 ; Psalm cxxx. 4 ; Matthew xviii. 28.

IV
THE PRACTICE

“ All these trifles, however, melted away each evening, when Jem and I, creeping under the shelter of the top-gallant fo’c’sle, held our intimate communion with Him whom we knew to be our Saviour-Brother. Our surroundings were as far removed from the conventional idea of a place of worship as could well be, for on this ship the owner had refused to house his sailors in a place only fit for pigs or non-perishable stores ; and consequently the top-gallant fo’c’sle, or space beneath the small raised deck over the bows of the ship, was unoccupied. It was like a cave of the winds. But we looked forward to our meeting there with the Presence each evening with great joy, and would often sit after prayer in perfect silence while slow tears of unutterable joy trickled down. I am painfully aware that many will be unable to refrain from smiling sarcastically at these words, many more will utterly refuse to believe them, others will want explanation and proof. But none of these things can alter the facts as I have recorded them one jot. We were young, ignorant, and unlettered ; our theology might have been summarised in two lines of book print. Yet as far as a man may, I solemnly affirm that we were both as near perfect happiness as a man can be in this world.”—FRANK T. BULLEN, *With Christ at Sea*, chap. vii.

IV

THE PRACTICE

Prayer is the matin lark that sings,
Bathed in pure heaven, elate, apart.
Then drooping earthward, folds her wings,
And sits upon the heart.

THE realised presence of Christ means a life of prayer without ceasing and of praise without pause. The whole day should be filled with the heavenly traffic. Brother Lawrence says that "we should establish ourselves in the sense of God's presence by continually conversing with Him." So each task of the day may give us an opportunity of raising our hearts to God ; we should speak to Him before each task, and during each task, and after each task.

Then he goes on to tell us that "one way to recall easily the mind in time of prayer, and to preserve it more in rest, is not to let it wander too far at other times." That is the topic before

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us—how we may prevent it wandering too far at other times.

Of course we are to have our definite times of prayer. It is essential that we have a place for prayer, and that we have a space for prayer every day.

Because we are such creatures of circumstance, and because of the power of association of ideas, everybody will agree that it is very helpful to have a place specially set apart for prayer—the corner of a room, the side of a table, or the spot beside a bed.

We must also have a space for prayer. It used to be a motto amongst students years ago : “ Watch the morning watch.” It is probably true for most Christian people that the early morning hours are the rudder of the day. But even in this you may get into bondage, because sometimes, in the busy industrial life of our towns, it is almost impossible to have the best time of the day in the early morning. The point that needs insistence is that the very best time of the day should be set apart to realise Christ's presence, to deepen the consciousness of His nearness, and to listen to His voice. It is worthy

of note that our Lord seemed to have His great prayer-times at night ; and the Apostle Paul tells us more than once that he prayed both night and day.

If we go to the Psalmists for guidance—and the Psalms have ever been the experience book of the Church—we find a variety of times in which the ancient singers praised and prayed. In one psalm we read : “ My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O Lord ; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up.” In another : “ I will sing of Thy power ; yea, I will sing aloud of Thy mercy in the morning.” In a third : “ It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O Most High : to show forth Thy loving-kindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night.” In a fourth : “ I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried : I hoped in Thy word. Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in Thy word.” And again, “ At midnight will I give thanks unto Thee because of Thy righteous judgments.” And yet again, “ Evening, morning, and noon will I pray, and cry aloud ; and He shall hear my voice.” You re-

member it was Daniel's custom to pray three times a day. But the climax of all is where the singer says: "Seven times a day will I praise Thee because of Thy righteous judgments." That is the perfection of praise.

Some of the old masters in intercession also have left us instruction on the blessed art. Bishop Lancelot Andrewes has gone deep into the matter in that book which he wrote for his own guidance at first, but which happily has been given to the Church of God; and William Law tells us that he divided the day into "watches" of three hours' interval. That is the suggestion I am going to make this morning, that we should pray seven times a day—not that we are to confine our praise and prayer to these specific times, nor that we shall always be able to remember them. Some of us may observe them all, and all of us some of them. Just as life will not be sanctified unless we have a hallowed day, the day will not be sanctified unless we have some hallowed hours.

Where shall we begin? First of all, we will agree that there should be the morning prayer, the morning watch. I suppose, on an average,

the busy life of each day for most of us begins about nine o'clock. I know that is too late for some, and perhaps there is just a suspicion that it may be too early for others ; but we will adjust things as we go on.

At nine o'clock, then, as we are confronting the business of the day, I think we might get into the holy habit of committing the day to the Lord in *morning prayer*. It may be only a little space that can be given, but there will be space enough to put the day, with all its problems, into the Lord's hands ; in praying to One who is not far off, but to Him who is near, and through Him to the Father who is in heaven. At this hour we may seek guidance and patience. We may ask for the spirit of industry and of pluck for the day's duties. We should open our minds, and our muscles, and our nerves to the great Presence by our side, for He who is Lord of our spirit is also the Saviour of the body. Then with a springing step and a blithe heart and a cheery face let us go out unafraid to the work of the day.

There is an old legend which I used to admire, about a monk in his cell who once, as he prayed

in the morning, had the presence of Christ revealed to him, and his heart filled with glory. Just then the bell summoned him to the kitchen for the service of the day, and the question rose in his heart whether he should stay in his cell with the Master who had granted him this wonderful favour, or go out to the menial duties of the house. Discipline prevailed, and he went to the kitchen duties, and hurried back—I am afraid he hurried through his duties too. When eagerly he came back to the cell, the Lord was still there, and smiling on him He said, “Hadst thou delayed, I had departed !”

Now that is very beautiful, but it is not a true bit of experience. There are lots of beautiful things that are not true. The truth is not that if Christ appears to you in your morning prayer, you have to hurry away to your life's duty, leaving Him behind, in the hope that you will find Him there when you return. The truth is that as you are called to the kitchen He will go with you there, and return with you when you next have leisure to worship Him. That is far finer than waiting for you until you return.

Patrick, the saint of Ireland, knew the reality of this continual presence. His morning prayer, as translated by Mrs. Alexander, runs like this :

Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me ;
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet and in danger,
Christ in the hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

Or, as another translator renders the terminal part of it :

Christ in the fort,
Christ in the chariot seat,
Christ in the poop !

The lonely sentinel, the lonely messenger, the lonely steersman, none of them need ever venture forth alone.

Without any contradiction, we should seek to practise *evening prayer*, and it would be a great reformation in manners if we could end our day at nine o'clock. We will therefore in thought jump the twelve hours from nine in the morning to nine at night. That no doubt will be early or late, in varying circumstances, but we can modify it according to our own life. But it would be a good thing if we could get the sense of rest

about nine o'clock in the evening, and not allow the stressful day to thrust its pressure into the last waking hours. And if at nine o'clock in the morning we commit the day to God, at nine o'clock at night we can commit the night to God, seeking His forgiveness for the soiled day and bringing our praise for His abounding goodness.

We shall also commit into His keeping the hours that are to be unconscious, for a great deal of Christian character is obtained in the hours of our sleep. The sub-conscious mind works when the world is stilled, and if you give it proper direction before you sleep, the probability is that much strength for Christian living will come to you when, as you lie unconscious, the great Shepherd is watching over and caring for you. Shall we then definitely commit the night into His keeping ?

For the weariest day
 May Christ be thy stay,
 For the darkest night
 May Christ be thy light,
 For the weakest hour
 May Christ be thy power,
 For each moment's fall
 May Christ be thy all.

What next ? The *noontide prayer*—" Evening,

morning, and at noon will I pray ! ” From the very earliest ages of the Church the noon hour has come with a special call to supplication. In these days the call is repeated from many different quarters. In view of the tragedy of the world none of us will forget the request of the Chaplain-General that we should at noon pray for our sailors and soldiers who are adventuring so much for us. But in normal life, if we pray in the morning for the day and in the evening for the night, at noon we should pray for the world. If the other habits are secure, let us add this. When the sun is highest and the world busiest, let us pause. Both hands of the clock point upwards : let our hearts also ascend. Paul is not the only saint who at midday has seen a light from heaven. At noon in Britain nearly all the lands of the world are in light. When it is twelve o'clock with us, it is eight o'clock in the evening in China—their day is finishing ; and it is four o'clock in the morning on the Pacific Coast of America—their day has just begun. So, as at our noon the light on a summer day is shining on almost all the people of the world, our soul may ascend in a missionary prayer. We

shall not forget the great purpose of the Master, that all the world should be flooded with His light and glory, nor the prophecy that prayer also shall be made for Him, and that daily shall He be praised.

The noon prayer will not necessitate a great break in the business of the day, but we can make a little space. In the mission house in London where I spend most of my hours, we have a noon bell rung, and everybody in the house knows the meaning of it. We are called by it to five minutes' quiet prayer. When visitors are with us, the bell gives the opportunity of asking them quietly to kneel with us. Sometimes they imagine they are being invited to a prayer-meeting, and begin to discover sudden engagements elsewhere; but when they find that it is the simple approach to the Master in the room where we happen to be, we are able in brief and un-prefaced petition to make known our wants and the needs of the world to the Father. And if the noon bell rings when we are alone, alone we pray, consecrating the minutes, and gaining grace by turning from the business of the day to the stillness of the Presence.

Not that the business is neglected ; but we can find a sanctuary round about us, however great the bustle of the day. Mr. M'Intyre tells of an old woman who had a big family ; it did not seem possible for her to get a quiet place for prayer, until she made a happy discovery, that in the midst of the clamour round about her she could shut the world out and separate herself to God by the simple experiment of throwing her apron over her head. You and I may invent other ways. I suggest to you, if you should be going along the street, and feel you want to pray at noontide, it is quite easy to stand at a window and pray. People will think you are looking at goods in the shop, and, unlike the Pharisees, you can pray in the streets so as *not* to be seen of men, and, reversing the promise but maintaining its intention, He who sees you openly will reward you in secret. You can meet Christ everywhere :

See Him in the street,
 Serve Him in the shop,
 Sow Him with thy wheat,
 House Him with thy crop.
 Love and learn Him more
 As the Common Friend,
 Joys thou thus shalt store
 For the happy end.

Now we advance three hours for the next watch, and come to the afternoon. Just think of what happened at that hour of the day, and hush your heart as you think of it. Christ died at three o'clock ! Would it not be most fitting, as Christian people whose whole hope is in the blood of Jesus, were we in the recollectedness of the Spirit to praise God for the Cross each day at three o'clock, and each day renew our confidence in the great atonement ? As the three strokes strike, we may think of the three things Christ did for us at Calvary. First, He took our sins, and bore them in His own body to the tree, making an end of them there for ever. Some of my friends tell me that their sins were buried in the tomb of Jesus ; mine did not get so far ; they were settled on the Cross. As the second stroke falls, let me praise Him that I have been crucified with Christ ; that not only did He settle the score between me and the Divine holiness, but He took me to the Cross with Him ; that I have been crucified, so that now, though I live, yet it is not I, but Christ, that liveth in me. On the third stroke, praise Him that the Cross is to conquer the world, that

the Cross is in the field, and that the Cross shall yet win the field. Prince Henry the Navigator said to his sailors, as they went down the coast of Africa, and talked of the riches they hoped to gain, that all this was nothing to him. "Plant the Cross on some new headland; that is what I want," he said. The Church of Christ must never rest until on every headland the Cross triumphs, and at three o'clock in the afternoon this may be our fitting prayer.

Well, then, we come to the next watch—six o'clock in the evening. Now what shall we say about this? In the old days it was the hour when the bell of recall sounded, the time of the Angelus, summoning from the blessed labour, and to the blessed rest. It may be for us too the time when our hearts are called to realise the peace of God that passeth all understanding, when we should guard against anxiety and worry, when every root of bitterness should be put away, and all strife and wrath and envy and jealousy cease.

I am going to suggest something else that is inexpressibly beautiful. It is said to us by the Lord Himself. The whole passage reads :

“Which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come out of the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye have done all those things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.”

Here is a man hard at work all day in the field, as we at our daily calling or business, and he comes in from his field service as we from our day's toil. You say all his service and ours is over! That is man's way, but the Lord's way is more excellent. After the field service the Master calls him to a little bit of house service. Of course the Lord has other servants engaged all the time in the house, but it is for the benefit of the field servants that they should have some house service too. So when they come in

from their toil, their Lord says, " Gird yourselves and serve Me." They who know the Master's way do it gladly, and are blessed in the doing. Is not that how we ought to behave towards our Master? Are we to conclude that when the day's work that we call secular is done, instantly there comes the time of relaxation, and that only at nightfall will come the call to fellowship? No, there is something that comes between the day's toil and our relaxation, and that something is fellowship with the Master Himself.

Six o'clock is thus the hour of the Master. To speak in terms of the parable, you have already served Him in the field, but now you are to have the greater honour of serving Him in His own presence. He calls you to wait on Him; not that He needs your waiting, but because He wants you to be near Him. If you went straight to your own meal in the evening, you would go in your garments stained with the earth or by contact with the cattle, and you would sit down to your meal roughly; but as you are going to serve your Master, you have to cleanse and array yourself in more beautiful garments.

That first. Then, as you serve, you hear the Master's speech, you see His satisfaction, you feel that you are helping Him to joy, and He smiles upon you. You are doing something direct for the Master, at the close of the day's toil that was His indirect service. He does not thank you for it, but when it is over and you see what it has brought to you, you will thank Him for it, and you will see that when He asked you to do something for Him He was actually doing something for you. After that service you will understand the Master better, and will realise more intimately that He knows and understands you.

You shall have your relaxation, but there will be better viands on your table because the Master has first feasted, and you will eat and drink in more delight in every way because you girded yourself in His presence. If you want to know what relaxations are lawful for Christians after the day's toil, first have fellowship with the Master, and then go out and do what you like. There are many things you will not feel inclined to do after that, and some things will be done graciously that perhaps you would have

done otherwise if you had not been with Him first. The service personal to the Master, manifesting toward Him the little bit of loyalty, handing Him something that will make Him glad, is the greatest reward for the impersonal service and the best guarantee of continued delight in the Lord.

Sometimes it is good to sing a hymn to Jesus, to sing when none but He is nigh. It is wise to sing in the congregation, since the Christian congregation is the only congregation in the world that has common praise. But sometimes sing a hymn to the Master Himself. I do it myself sometimes, though I am always careful to sing when I am quite alone. We bring the Lord our requests, why not our praises? We cry to Him in our distress, why should we not sing to Him in our glee? But, silent or singing, there is to be the time of realised contact. Then we may go to the evening's relaxation, and eat and drink in glad content and perfect freedom. Six o'clock is the hour of the Master.

We have now gone round the twelve hours of the clock, and have fixed the five watches of

the day : at nine o'clock committing the day to the Lord ; at twelve o'clock committing the world to the Lord ; at three o'clock adoring at the foot of the Cross ; at six o'clock holding fellowship with the Master Himself, special fellowship with Him who is near all the time ; at nine o'clock committing the night into His care, and letting the soothing influence of the evening bathe our souls. But we began with the intention of praising seven times a day, and these are only five. Well, there are two other hours—six o'clock in the morning and twelve o'clock at night.

I suppose most people who are awake at six will not be awake at twelve, and people who are awake at twelve will not be awake at six, though of course there are perfect souls who can be awake at both times !

Six o'clock in the morning, when we awake, should be a sanctified hour. I do not speak of the blessing that may come as we open the Word of God, but of the direct, spontaneous fellowship between our spirit and God.

What shall be the topic of prayer and praise in the earliest hour ? Surely the Holy Spirit,

who distils on our heart like the dew. Mr. Spurgeon voices our cry :

While flowers are wet with dews,
Dew of our souls, descend ;
Ere yet the sun the day renews,
O Lord, Thy Spirit send.

In the early morning, with our own hearts tender, in the presence of Christ we may praise for the Holy Spirit who takes the things of Christ and shows them to us, and then seek more of His power. The thing we have to learn about the Holy Spirit, who is near us, with us, and in us, is that He is to be received, is to be daily received, and that He is so sensitive that He will not consciously stay with us unless we definitely seek His presence. Each morning, then, let me receive the Holy Ghost, as at first, saying, " Be pleased to stay with me this day and possess me wholly."

On a previous page it has been said that, normally, our prayer is to be to the Father in heaven. But I am sure we shall not be chided if in the morning we pray to the Spirit, and ask Him to be with us, that He may blessedly reveal the glorious Christ through the day. The early morning, then, is the time for the Holy Ghost.

There is a hymn that Indian Christians sing which has been translated by William Carey's grandson, and harmonised to the haunting Bengali air by Carey Bonner. The last verse runs like this, and drops the soft dews of quietness on our hearts as we sing :

Show me Thy face at the dawn,
Give me to see Thee at break of day.
O Saviour King,
Show me Thy face at the dawn.
As the dew now softly falleth,
So refresh the soul that calleth ;
Drop by drop Thy grace distilling, bless me,
O my Saviour King ;
Show me Thy face at the dawn !

At midnight there is one petition that will inevitably rise to the lip of the instructed saint who may be awake at the hour—to pray for the coming of the Bridgeroom, to seek hasten the day of the Lord, to delight in the hope of the glorious Epiphany of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. “At midnight there was a great cry made, Behold, the Bridegroom cometh.” Every midnight when I am awake I say : “O blessed Bridegroom, come ; speed Thine appearing ; draw aside the veil that hides Thee, and show Thy glories to the world. Hear the prayer of Thy

Church and the sigh of the world. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Even so. Amen."

It is certain to be actual midnight when He comes. It will probably be like midnight everywhere so far as the expectancy of the world goes or the watchfulness of careless saints. But we must not be too literal; at different places there will be different hours. Our Lord Himself describes this realistically. He says that at the great Revelation there will be two men sleeping in a bed: it will be night there. There will be two women grinding at the mill: it will be dawn there; they will be just preparing the morning meal. There will be two men in the field: it will be midday there. In this world midnight in one place is midday in another. When the Lord comes, it will be all hours; but in a real sense it will be midnight everywhere. When hope is lowest and evil most rampant, when we try to help each other in vain, and the Church stretches out impotent hands to the world, in such an hour He shall come. God's sky shall rend, Christ's glory shall be seen, the appeal of the centuries shall be answered. At midnight, therefore, we may most appropriately pray: "Come, Lord

Jesus, come quickly," being well assured that His advent is certain at some uncertain moment.

But though we cannot tell when He will come, we heed His warning and hope in His word. "Blessed are those servants," He says, "whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching." His servants have girded themselves and served Him at the evening hour, but at that hour, come when it may, "Verily I say unto you, He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down with Him, and go forth and serve them. And if He come in the second watch, or in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants."

So we have our seven watches, though possibly none of us will recollect them all, nor be able, even if we remember, to observe the exact hour—at six in the morning, when we think of the Holy Spirit ; at nine in the morning, when we commit the day to the Lord ; at twelve, when we bring the world to His feet ; at three, when we glory in the Cross ; at six, when we seek special renewal of personal fellowship ; at nine, when we commit the night with all its possibilities

into His hand ; and then at twelve, when we ardently long for the glorious day that is coming.

But we shall scarcely yet be content. There is still an unbridged interval. I know a man whose time for special prayer is not any of these. His experience is his own, but at three o'clock in the morning he finds himself wakened to hold communion with the Master and spread out his wants before His face. That is not a pattern for others, but it may suggest that if you are awake at three o'clock, if sleep is denied you, remember that it is no accident, think that it is the Lord holds your eyes waking. He wants you perhaps to have songs in the night, to turn His statutes into songs in the hours of your pilgrimage, or perhaps He wants you to pray for the sleeping saints. It is good to think that the Lord has some waking saints to pray for the sleeping saints, that He keeps some saints awake to pray for the sick and for the mourners, saints who will not forget those who are weary in the darkness, seeing that they themselves wait for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning.

If at midnight we think of the Lord Jesus in His coming glory, and at six in the morning of the blessed Spirit of Grace, surely if we awake at three o'clock in the morning, we may think of the Holy Father, whose watchful care is tender as a mother watching over her child; we can recall His promises: "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him," and "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." It is something that the Lord has a special blessing for the wakeful.

He gives His angels charge of those who sleep,
But He Himself watches with those who wake.

The great charm of sainthood and the whole secret of victory is that, whether waking or sleeping, whether serving or resting, the whole day may be filled with the glorious presence that makes life glad. We may always know and often realise that our Redeemer is by our side. At special times we may make little or large spaces that shall assure our feeble and faltering hearts that what we believe is a real fact, praying not that the Lord should be with us, but seeking that we should dwell

more consciously in the sanctuary of His holy Presence.

I need not leave the jostling world,
Nor wait till daily tasks are o'er,
To fold my hands in secret prayer
Within the close-shut closet door.
There is a viewless cloistered room
As high as heaven, as fair as day,
Where, though my feet may join the throng,
My soul may enter in and pray.

"I have no bad dreams," Grant answered me.
"Rather, I have one good dream which is very persistent. For I hardly ever awake from sleep nowadays without finding myself engaging in the act of prayer."

He went on, "Prayer is my Fourth Dimension. When I am alone I cannot think on any theme without bringing in God; and of all the intellectual—not to say spiritual—pleasures my chiefest is to talk with Him."

I told him that what helped me to pass wakerife hours was just remembering the Insomnia of God:

"Behold, He that keeps Israel,
He slumbers not, nor sleeps."

Men of the Knotted Heart, pages 139, 140, 184.

Psalm v. 3, lix. 16, xcii. 1, 2, cxix. 147, 148, cxix. 62, lv. 17, cxix. 64; Luke xvii. 7-10; Titus ii. 13; Matthew xxv. 6; Luke xvii. 34-36, xii. 37; Psalm ciii. 13, cxxi. 4.

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